

“In the Light of Mercy”

**Read an icon through the eyes of your heart,
open to resting in *Mystery*, as the *Holy* gazes upon you.**

Soften your gaze to the colors and patterns.

Notice there is a subtle vertical, horizontal design of a cross.

The top of the icon speaks of the Spirit of Light and Peace, her grace pervades all. She invites us to walk in the way of non-violence, in harmony with creation, represented by nature’s olive branch. There is an indication that the Spirit is in solidarity with the suffering of all-kinds, symbolized with the red line emitting from the dove. – The Spirit invites us to approach all through non-violence.

Three stars remind us of the Trinitarian story of life, death, resurrection of life. They suggest that the story of life is more than Earth, open to the universe, and to the marvel of ongoing creation.

Earth is where our present story unfolds, where life as we know it is in crisis.

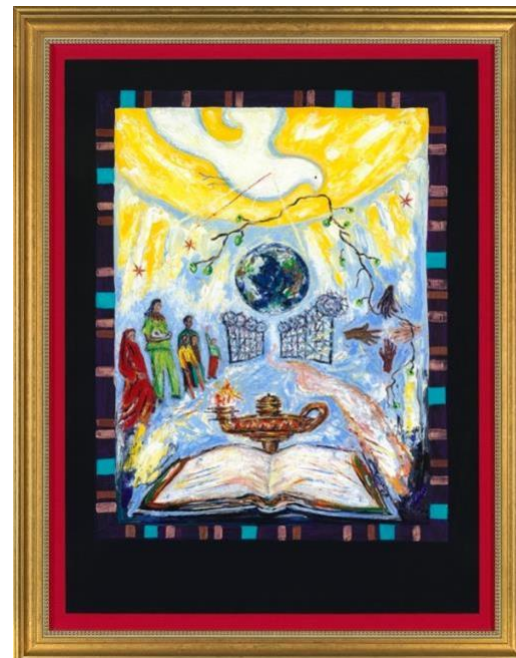
Under Earth, a horizontal bar of images depicts three concerns: women and the marginalized; a barbed wire fence with a path through it symbolizes immigration/migration; and hands of many for anti-racism. – Struggle, with a sense of possibility. – All five concerns are inter-related and complex.

Grounding the bottom of this “cross” is a lamp and a book, symbolizing the gift and the attention that is necessary for contemplation and learning, all kinds of learning, from all ways and paths, including religious books such as Scripture and the Book of Nature. -- The lamp’s flame is a small reflection of the Great Light. Human seeing, learning, and loving are not perfect. Still, we seek the Light, so we tend the fire as it burns and glows in an effort to follow a holistic, holy path forward, generation upon generation.

To respond to the needs of our times requires transformation, the burning away of biases, narrowness . . . and the cultivating of a welcomeness to new possibilities, opening to a grace we yearn to experience more deeply. Humbly, we realize that life keeps moving, with or without humans, like the colored squares that bob around the outer edges, even in the dark.

Let us pray for our ongoing transformation and for the health and well-being of Earth and all who abide here and, possibly, even beyond.
Holy Spirit, be with us, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, as we forgive one another, and lead us in the ways of peace, now and forever and into the ages. Amen

Icon written in prayer during 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic, using a contemporary approach to iconography. Iconographer is a Sister of Mercy.



In the Light of Mercy

1. Through the Spirit of Non-Violence, seek creative, ethical, and collaborative ways to live, speak, work, play and do good, avoid evil and do no harm. Instead, serve the common good and preserve and nurture the commons.
2. As members of the Earth community, live and act for the future of a healthy, bio-diverse and beautiful planet.
3. As people of Mercy, act with and for Women and all who are marginalized and suffering.
4. As people of Mercy, work for compassionate, humane and just Immigration and Migration policies and practices around the globe.
5. As people of Mercy, strive and labor for Anti-Racism, and for policies and practices of inclusiveness, equitability, fairness and justice, and for the recognition of the inherent worth and dignity of each and all.

*See, Feel, Question, seek Understanding, Pray, Collaborate & Act
Live in the Light of Mercy’s Wisdom through Contemplation & Action*

Mercy is the tenderness of God experienced in the world through ordinary and exceptional moments in our lives, personally and collectively. This is not a benign gentleness by a distant force but, according to many traditions, a dynamic presence that pervades each moment and every space. According to many, it is a drawing forth of all into the very heart of the Divine, into the power and intimate presence of Cosmic unity and diversity, into Incarnational Mystery of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, paradoxically, experienced in stillness and in dance, through silence and the song of the world and the song of the universe, in exaltation and in tears.

In the Christian Scriptures, in both the Gospels of Mathew and Luke, we find a list of teachings called “The Beatitudes.” In addition, as part of the Christian tradition, we have the seven Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy to which Pope Francis added an eighth, care of Earth.

These writings and teachings help to focus the quality of our attention and action in the world, but in each era there are particular troubles that require the collective, monumental energies of the people. In 1991 the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas began to collectively discern what the needs and concerns are of this era and to realign efforts and ministries for the future. As a result, five broad concerns surfaced, which under or around most other needs and questions of the times can be located or connected in some manner or form.

The naming of these five concerns is based on the needs of the times, the charism of the Sisters of Mercy, Catholic Christian theology and ethics, and diverse spiritualities, as well as experience, dialogue, research, analysis, prayer and contemplation. Most significantly has been the acknowledgement that we, as Mercy, are complicit in the failings, sufferings, and difficulties, and are called to conversion and to work for a more merciful, just, and healthy world on a limited planet named Earth. Thus, we have what are called, “Mercy Critical Concerns.”

Since 2017 the Circle of Mercy consciously intends to view and encounter the world through a lens of non-violence. While the Catholic Church teaches that we must do all that one can to prevent conflicts, such as establish structures and norms that support peace and justice, humanity’s actions are not perfect. We sin, we “miss the

mark” of doing good and avoiding evil. Even when we diligently discern ethical questions, we often have to choose a not so perfect solution to difficult situations. While we more-times-than-not witness the best of the human spirit during crises, there can also emerge the worst, such as unfettered greed, course reactions born of fear, ignorance, biases, and superstitions, as well as emotional frustration that lashes out, erupting as a result of burdens too heavy, carried for too long, with no end in view.

Thus, Catholic tradition acknowledges and supports a two-pronged approach to being and acting in the world, a non-violent or pacifistic path and a measured forcefulness by legitimate authority to keep and restore security and the absence of violence when necessary.

Mercy throws its efforts toward the non-violent wing of this tradition because of who we are and what we have to humbly offer toward the future. Preventing conditions that give rise to conflict and working for understanding and just policies help to create areas where these “two prongs” initially must intersect. Ultimately, the art of peace is never static, but rest in dynamic processes, patterns, character maturity, and community will that support justice, fairness, and appreciation of our communalities and differences. Relationships with each other and all kinds of others, including with Earth’s systems, must be respectful, life giving and attuned to the ebb and flow and evolution of life. For this, understanding, collaboration, mercy and even sacrifice, are part-and-parcel of right relationships.

Contemplation without the light of knowledge and understanding, seasoned with compassion, can find our actions misguided and shortsighted, and further contributing to what is ailing. To arrive at the underlying causes of suffering and injustice, and then to respond wisely, the work of listening to each other, all kinds of others, including rivers and forests, of gathering information, of doing research and analysis, and achieving broad understanding, must take place. With every “woe” there are perpetrated any number of false cures. – Each concern requires deep listening and attention, questioning, examination, reflection, understanding, compassion, prayer . . . grace, and wise, humble leaders to help us navigate our way.